

State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting
November 24, 2015

Hosted by Sherre Copeland, NRCS Partnership Liaison

Introductions/Attending:

- Jeff Harlow, Alan McBee, Rick Noble, Doug Allen, Sherre Copeland, Bonda Habets, Dave Kreft, Heidi Eisenhour, Lief Fixen, Alan Walker, Rachel Maggi, Mathew Blau, Megan Stewart, Jay Morgan, Mike Kuttel, Jr., Mike Baden, Michelle Hennings, Josh Giuntoli, George Boggs, Russ MacRaey, Ginger Phalen, Kevin Guinn, Bruce Gordon, Mike Crowder, Terry Mansfield, Dirk Helder, Karen Bishop, Rod Hamilton. Others may have attended via webinar or teleconference as this meeting is open to the public (conference recorded).

Welcome and Opening Comments—Agenda Review

Sherre Copeland, NRCS

Sherre welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda for any updates. She thanked everyone for their support and interaction on the STAC.

Easement subcommittee to the STAC

Dave Kreft, NRCS Easement Coordinator

- Dave thanked the Easement Committee for participating in putting together recommendations for the STAC. He then reviewed the Washington 2016ARC document, the 2015 ALEP Template and the FY 2016 ACEP ALE Parcel Eligibility and Ranking Worksheet. Feedback from the STAC was requested for these draft documents no later than December 1, 2015. Copies of these documents were uploaded to the STAC Website:
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/wa/technical/stc/minutes/>

CRP Managed Haying and Grazing Rules in WA State

Rod Hamilton, FSA

- Rod is seeking feedback from the STAC by December 11, 2015 on whether to change frequency on the CRP haying and grazing provisions. Current provisions allow haying and grazing once in every four years. Frequency can be increased to allow once in every two years for grazing, or can be elongated to a less frequent interval. Frequency for haying can be from once every three years to once every five years. Any changes must be applied to the entire state. If a change is made the new rules, the current approved grazing period for most counties will have to be revised so that it does not cross from one fiscal year to the next. The decision, which will be made by the board on December 16, will consider STAC input and will be applied for the upcoming CRP sign up beginning in a few weeks. Provide your comments directly to Rod at rod.hamilton@wa.usda.gov.

WDFW Sage Grouse Conservation

Mike Kuttel, Jr., WDFW

- Mike noted the WDFW is seeking input on proposed protective status of snowy plovers and northern spotted owls via their website: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/news/sep0815a/> comments are due by December 8, 2015. WDFW is also seeking feedback on proposed protective status of the greater sage-grouse and western gray squirrel via their website: Mike will put together contacts and link this on their website: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/news/sep3015a/> and

comments are due December 29, 2015. Once the reviews are finalized, they will be re-evaluated in 5 years.

- Mike will coordinate development of Sage Grouse “tool kit” that would serve as one stop shop resource for information about sage-grouse recovery efforts in Washington State. Mike will also explore the possibility of WDFW hosting a Sage-Grouse “tool kit” page on the agency website. The sage Grouse Initiative (SGI) has already protected over 4 million acres of sage-grouse habitat throughout the 11 western states that support sage-grouse. SGI 2.0 has allocated about \$211 million for sage-grouse conservation effort through 2018. Mike requested the STAC share the Sage-Grouse Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) fact sheet with their constituents. The CCAA is an option for producers to implement voluntary conservation practices and receive regulatory certainty if sage-grouse are listed for protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in the future. The Douglas County Multiple-Species General Conservation Plan (MSGCP) was also discussed as an option for producers to implement voluntary conservation practices and receive regulatory certainty if sage-grouse, pygmy rabbit, Washington ground squirrel, or sharp-tailed grouse are listed under the ESA in the future.
- Please direct any questions to Mike at Michael.KuttelJr@dfw.wa.gov.

Biology Technical Note; Fish and Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide

Rachel Maggi, NRCS State Biologist

- Rachel reviewed the Riparian Forest Biology Technical Note 14 and explained the in-depth process for recording soil type, tree species buffer width, site index height and buffer length. She also reviewed the WA SVAP 2 Field Reference Sheet, the FY 16 Riparian Buffer Conservation Strategy for Working Lands, and the Checklist of Resource Concerns Landscape handouts. All of these handouts were sent via email to the STAC and are available on the STAC website at:
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/wa/technical/stc/minutes/>

NRCS Air Quality Initiative

Bonda Habets, NRCS State Resource Conservationist

- Bonda provided the STAC with the draft Air Quality Initiative for Washington State. She asked the STAC to assist with outreach opportunities and ideas for this initiative including greenhouse gas. The draft is posted on the STAC website at:
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/wa/technical/stc/minutes/> and once finalized, the initiative will be posted to the Washington State NRCS website. This is a competitive program and assistance may be provided for conservation cover, residue and tillage management windbreak/shelterbelt establishment, nutrient management, waste recycling and many more.
- Please email any comments to Sherre Copeland and she will forward for consideration.

USFWS – Mazama Pocket Gopher Scheduled for January STAC meeting

Sherre Copeland, NRCS Partnership Liaison

- Sherre gave a quick announcement that we will hear about the Mazama Pocket Gopher at the January STAC meeting.

Additional Questions/Comments

Sherre thanked everyone from their time and the meeting adjourned at 12:30 pm. The next STAC meeting is scheduled for January 26, 9:30 am to 3:00 pm.